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Being a Part of the Global Force For Good

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By Lt. Cmdr. Sherri Hoskins, MSC, assistant officer-in-charge, Cajun Care 2014



A “Global Force for Good” is what it said on the back of a large Navy recruiter bus that sat several cars up in traffic. To think that in Navy Medicine, we get to be part of this initiative. All the many benefits we provide, big or small, all work together to create this one force for good.

This month, I had the pleasure to lead a group of Navy and Air National Guard physicians, dentists, pharmacists, optometrists, psychiatrists and enlisted service members as the Assistant Officer-in-Charge at Cajun Care, a Department of Defense Innovative Readiness Training program designed to provide medical care to an underserved population here in the United States.

After arriving in Abbeville, La., all the planning that had been done the months prior began to come into place. Navy Reserve members from units located all over the country began to arrive, and we were soon joined by groups of Air National Guardsmen who had traveled from around the U.S.



We were a hodgepodge of providers from all corners of the nation, coming together to train in the ability to deploy and mobilize – moving equipment and personnel – as well as help the small town of Abbeville and its surrounding communities. Abbeville had been hit hard by the down turned economy and was a historically underserved

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Hospital Corpsman 2nd Class Kevin Blake checks the blood pressure of a patient during Cajun Care 2014 in Abbeville, La. (Photo by Mass Communication Specialist 1st Class Bruce Cummins)

population in medical care. Many of the individuals we met during our two-week mission could not afford to meet their basic health care needs. In addition, we found that with the economic difficulties combined

with cultural eating habits, an environment where hypertension and diabetes flourished. In addition to general medical help, Navy and Air Guardsmen dentists and their support staff performed exams, fillings and even extractions. The optometry section performed complete eye exams, wrote prescriptions, and even made complete eyeglasses for their patients. Other Navy and Air Guardsmen experts offered pharmacy, psychiatric counseling and nutrition and dietary consultation. We found that not only providing the health care and screening that each individual needed but combining it with nutritional education and consultation, we leave this town with a longer lasting effect. From a training standpoint, this was about readiness. Will we be ready to respond to a disaster? Each of us had to pack, prepare, travel and live in an area without our usual conveniences, in a different culture and different environment. We had to develop processes and procedures as we began to get a full-service health care clinic up and running in a matter of a few hours.

We had to learn and adapt processes and find support in each other. We were Airman and Sailors and discovered that as we come together, we are a Global Force for Good. The town and people of Abbeville truly had southern charm. Being part of this community for a two-week training evolution was a delight and will be a memory for a lifetime. It has been a true honor and pleasure to serve this community.

Check out the Cajun Care 2014 Facebook page [here](#) for more photos and information from the mission.



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